

From: Martin McKinney <martinjmck@gmail.com>

Date: May 31, 2018 at 10:52:22 PM CDT

To: Ryan Greenlee <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>

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Subject: Re: Cafe Culture

All,

I met with our trainers this week and they have asked that we change the training dates to Monday June 11, Tuesday June 12 and Wednesday June 13, 2018 from 6pm until 8pm each day. While we can pay you for attending the training, you are also able to attend without pay as we are a non-profit cafe. I would like for everyone to attend.

The agenda for each evening is as follows:

June 11

Getting to know each other (led by the facilitators)

Learning the origin of conflict

Having restorative conversations

June 12

Establishing working guidelines

June 13

Understanding equity and trauma

We cannot call our cafe a place of safety for vulnerable people and simply invert the power dynamic and commit the same behaviors of backbiting, judgment and non-care for one another's feelings and bodies. I hope that you will see me with questions.

Martin

On Wed, May 23, 2018 at 3:39 AM, Martin McKinney <martinjmck@gmail.com> wrote:

Co-workers,

When we started Stories Connect (founded as a collection of essayists and human rights workers) the parent organization of Sanctuary Cafe, we established guiding principles to speak to our identity. These are the guiding principles:

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- Our columns would not pathologize communities or bodies; we speak about communities from a place of wholeness and restoration;
- Whenever possible, we would want to highlight and amplify the voices of those who have actually, mostly suffered and speak from that perspective;
- We will want to ask our readers to challenge their own privilege, especially racial privilege, and to consider that truly systemic change requires the acknowledgement of the racialization of others as a means to hold power; this is really helping people to understand how they publicly stand for justice, but recognize and hold on to their proximity to racial power, deny their beliefs and project race onto others, both people of color and bad actors;
- It is imperative that we identify and reject the centrality of white and maleness as normative. We aim to remove political and social ideals around what is normative;
- We do not believe that human rights abuse is the problem of the oppressed, which reinforces supremacy and perpetuates the belief that our work is for "others". We believe that illuminating abuse requires each of us to acknowledge that we are the others, that what is happening is happening to you, not me;
- We reject economic systems that do not seek to allow all people to live in dignity, exercise freedom of movement and discourage the commodization of communities.

I have failed you, not only because I have made mistakes and offended some of you, but also because I have not clearly communicated my vision for the cafe and asked you to buy into this vision. While I have spent the last year working to save the cafe from failure, I do believe that without food, we will be unable to discuss justice and art, I have not spent enough time considering what the cafe means to the communities it serves. I have not been able to focus on who we are and how we live into that identity.

Recent events in our cafe that are the result of growth, such as menu complexities and staffing changes, are challenging us. Additionally, and importantly, identity is always a challenge. Our identities are not simply race, gender or loving relationship realities. Identity is all the layers of our lives, the circumstances, environment, our cultural exposure, etc., etc., etc. These layers grow more complex as we age, navigate, learn, hurt and heal.

My interest is in creating an environment of understanding and forgiveness, not one where we simply exist and demand space without surrendering space; our space must be courageous.

Indigenous cultures use peace circles to resolve conflict, including complex conflict, where diverse members of communities come together with the participants to discuss. These circles encourage egalitarian and respectful dialogue, not agreements. Where we work to create the kind of environment that is respectful we also must be willing to understand one another and one another's perspectives and layers. This, for me, means that we do not depend on outside parties to resolve our differences, we resolve our differences and we do so as we look at and to one another and as we honor one another's existence. Stories Connect cannot become like corporate culture, where we simply excommunicate those who upset the balance or offend. Neither can it become a country club where we simply hang out and relax until the next time we come together without real relationship with people or difficult situations.

I have invited Olivia Chase and M. Michelle Day to come and meet with our entire staff on June 4th at 5pm (tentatively). Recall that this is the day that we close at 4pm. I would like ALL staff to attend so please make sure you have considered all possibilities that may keep you from attending. Olivia and Michelle will do some peace circle and team building training with us. Please see me with questions.

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Martin

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Martin